Between Europe and Latin America : Catholicism, New Theology, and the Revolution in Cuba

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Resumen
El capítulo analiza las redes trasnacionales e hispánicos de la orientación teológica y pastoral de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba durante la revolución de Fidel Castro (1959–). Utilizando nuevas -e inéditas- fuentes primarias pertenecientes a los archivos de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba, el capítulo ilustra los cambios en la relación de la Iglesia tanto a la sociedad socialista, como al catolicismo global. El capítulo argumenta que, durante las décadas de 1960, 1970 y 1980, mientras buscaba una voz distintivamente cubana, la Iglesia local se situó entre Europa y América Latina.

Palabras clave
Catolicismo, la Iglesia Católica, Cuba, la revolución cubana, América Latina, teología de la liberación

Abstract
The chapter analyzes the transnational and Hispanic exchanges of the Catholic Church between Cuba, Latin America and Europe. The main argument is that in the context of the Cuban revolution and socialist society (1959–), the Church attempted to construct a distinctively Cuban orientation while balancing between European and Latin American Catholic traditions. This included multifaceted processes of transnational, not exclusively Hispanic, negotiations regarding the evolving Catholic social doctrine, financial relations, and the autonomy of local churches.

Keywords
Catholicism, the Catholic Church, Cuba, the Cuban revolution, Latin America, liberation theology

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Between Europe and Latin America: Catholicism, New Theology, and the Revolution in Cuba

In Cuba, the revolution of Fidel Castro began to define all aspects of life on the island in 1959. For religion and religious agency, the revolutionary period marked an era of repositioning and renewal. This chapter examines and analyzes the theological and pastoral orientation and discourse of the Catholic Church in Cuba in the networks of transnational, Hispanic, and Catholic exchange. In the context of the Cuban revolution and socialist society, the chapter traces the reactions and discourses of the Cuban Church from a global, transnational perspective. At the center of the narrative are the dynamics of continuity and change: the shifts in Cuban theology and ecclesial agency that reoriented the local Church from a Eurocentric perspective towards the new Catholic ideas emerging in Latin America from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s while maintaining a relationship to European Catholicism as well.

The chapter consists of three chronologically presented, intertwining, periods during which discourse on Hispanic and transnational Catholicism characterized the dynamics and interaction between religion and the revolution. The first part focuses on the early 1960s and the unfolding debate on the Spanish legacy of the Catholic Church in Cuba in the radicalization of the revolution. The second part, centering on the 1970s, shows how new Catholic thought from Latin America began to take shape in Cuba and placed the Cuban Church in between European and Latin American Catholic traditions. The third and final part, analyzing the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, shows that Cubans actively discussed, interpreted and contested both European and Latin American Hispanic Catholicism in a process that led to the construction of a distinctively Cuban Catholic theology stemming from, and responding to, the revolution.

The article draws on previously unstudied Cuban primary sources: historical documents produced by the Catholic Church and currently hosted in archives managed by Catholic institutions on the island. The most important archives consulted for the article are the Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference (*Archivo de la Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de Cuba*) and the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana (*Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana*). Additionally, the article also includes documents housed in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba, MINREX*), most notably diplomatic correspondence between the Holy See and the Cuban government. Other relevant sources are the oral histories of Cuban Catholics pertaining to different ranks of the ministry, who witnessed the events discussed in the article. The interviews were conducted by the author in Cuba in 2015–2018. They are referred to as anonymous, which is a standard procedure in scholarship that deals with the recollections of contemporaries on possibly sensitive political and social topics (Richie, 2015: 120–121).

Cuba has severely limited access to the archives on the island since the early 1960s. The silence of the archives that still dominates the work of scholars, apart from a few rare exceptions, such as the sources appearing in this work, has been particularly damaging for historical scholarship drawing on documentary evidence (Pérez, 1992: 66; Mesa-Lago, 1992; Gleijeses, 2002: 9–10; Sweig, 2002: 190–191; Gleijeses, 2013; Chase, 2015: 15; Benson, 2016: 22; Macle Cruz, 2019). As such, the introduction of the previously unstudied primary sources in this article marks a new opening in international scholarship on both religion and the revolution in Cuba. In international Cuban studies, a focus on the transnational exchange of the revolution is an emerging field. Religion, however, remains an understudied area of the Cuban revolution and socialist society. This analysis contributes to both of these fields with new perspectives on global and transnational networks of Hispanic Catholicism in revolutionary Cuba.

The Church, the Spanish Legacy, and the Revolution in the 1960s

In 1959, the revolution of Fidel Castro transformed Cuba's political, economic, social, and cultural life. The changes introduced to life on the island were all-encompassing and thorough. Within the first year of Fidel Castro's leadership, the revolutionary government overturned the dynamics of ownership, social politics, education, and culture (Pérez-Stable, 2012: 66–67; Pérez, 2015: 253–261).

In the rapidly changing society, the public role, position and agency of religious institutions, communities, and individuals were also in flux. The Church supported the revolution in its initial stages and approved of the changes introduced by the revolutionary regime, such as the Agrarian Reform that transformed land ownership throughout the island. However, the episcopal hierarchy, clerics, and numerous lay groups grew suspicious and increasingly loud in their opposition to the direction of the revolution that they considered communist.[1]

As the course of the revolution and the restructuring of the country was unclear, the Church considered itself in a position and role to influence the evolving revolutionary politics at the initial stages in 1959–1960. Suspicious of communist influences, the episcopate and clergy harnessed Catholic social teaching into the discourse on politics and social order on the island.[2] In this context, the Catholic tradition in Cuba appeared predominantly European and, more specifically, Spanish. In the early 1960s, Cuba had only a small portion of Cuban clergy: the majority of them, as of the member of religious orders, were Spanish. In 1960, four of the six bishops in Cuba were of Spanish origin. Many of the Spanish clerics mirrored the Cuban situation against their personal experience of Franco's Spain. In this perspective, the increasing leftist current in the revolutionary politics and rhetoric was a source of unrest, criticism and, at times, resistance.[3]

At the same time, the episcopal hierarchy in Cuba relied heavily on the social doctrine of the Catholic Church to discuss and challenge the socialist ideas on society. In 1959, the Church in Cuba referred to Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, published in 1891, to support social justice and to highlight natural law as the foundation of social order (Kuivala, 2019: 76). Similarly, the Spanish clergy on the island analyzed the situation in light of the *Divini Redemptoris*, the encyclical by Pope Pius XII on communism in the context of the Spanish Civil War in 1937 (De La Torre, 2002: 98; De La Torre, 2003; 27). The Cuban Church voiced the longstanding Latin American principle of maintaining a close union between the Church and the State, drawing on the majority of the people identifying as Catholics (Kuivala, 2019: 76; O'Malley, 2008: 212).

As has been discussed by scholars, such as Margaret Crahan and John M. Kirk, the institutional religious engagement and affiliation of Cubans was low in comparison to the rest of Latin America (see Crahan 1979 and Kirk 1989). At the turn of the 1960s, the Cuban Church appeared a religious institution of the urban middle and upper class, predominantly white, Cubans in its public image and activities. As such, the Church represented an institution for the elite whose way of life was changing rapidly because of the revolution. The privilege of Catholics in Cuban society was most visible through education: access to Catholic private schools, and the financial means of enrollment, were reserved for the wealthiest segment of society. As

[1] La reforma agraria y el arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba, 21.7.1959; Diario de la Marina, 8.3.1959, "Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes"; Diario de la Marina, 8.3.1959, "Sacerdotes cubanos al programa de la ACU en televisión"; Diario de la Marina, 8.3.1959, "Urbi et Orbi."

[2] Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Caballeros Católicos de La Habana, Circular Septiembre de 1959; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Caballeros Católicos de La Habana, Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; Diario de la Marina, 10.4.1959, "Urbi et Orbi"; Diario de la Marina, 14.4.1959, "Acto en La Milagrosa."

[3] The perspectives derived from Franco's Spain among the Spanish clergy in Cuba are discussed by, among others, Crahan 1985; Kirk 1989; Alonso Tejada 1999.

socially privileged Cubans were usually of white Hispanic origin, the nexus of religion and social status also reflected the inequality experienced by Cubans of African origin and, consequently, their disaffiliation from institutional Catholicism (Kuivala, 2019: 94–95, 100).

From early on, the leadership and the vanguard of the revolution attempted to construct a cohesive revolutionary story: a narrative that would legitimize the revolution and its politics by emphasizing the support of the Cuban people and the nature of the revolution as a mass movement (Guerra, 2012: 5–6, 9, 133). In this narrative, religion become a synonym for potentially dangerous thought and action, counterrevolutionary attitudes and confrontation with the established revolutionary order. As the revolution had built on national identity and sovereignty, the nature of the Catholic Church as a global, transnational, and universal religious agent was problematic, particularly as the support of the Church turned to criticism and, ultimately, rejection of the socialist direction of the revolution.

When the Cuban government assumed a hardline policy on criticism and alternative thought, with Fidel Castro embodying both the legitimacy and authority of the revolution's leadership, the Church–State relations were also a matter of autonomy and power (Kuivala, 2019: 87–88). The autonomous agency and identity of the Church, as well as individual Catholics, was an issue of national coherence. The Church and its vision of social order could not be defined by national borders or citizenry. Similarly, practising Catholics adhered to the authority of the Church and the Pope as its personification, which surpassed the temporal regime and its power.

In 1960–1961, as the revolution took a turn towards socialism, the nationalistic narrative became the primary framework through which the institutional church, episcopal hierarchy and clergy were introduced to the general public by the revolutionary leadership.[4] As a simultaneous process, a revolutionary – as a category of ideal citizenry – became a synonym for patriotism and, consequently, those opposing the socialist ideology of the revolution were considered antipatriotic (Pedraza, 2007: 216, 221, 223–224). As the majority of clergy in Cuba were Spanish, then, they were portrayed as a social element potentially dangerous to mass cohesion and, thus, the legitimacy of the revolution. Spaniards were linked to Franco's Spain, which made them automatically suspect (Kirk, 1989: 87; Schmidt, 2015: 209). According to historian John M. Kirk, some Spanish clerics in Cuba used the Church as a forum to discuss the politics of their homeland, for instance by celebrating Masses for Franco's victory in Spain (Kirk, 1989: 83).

From 1960 to 1961, the Cuban government severely restricted the public domain of the Church and religious communities. As all education and healthcare was brought under State control, Catholic schools and hospitals could no longer operate. Catholic media, such as newspapers and periodicals, was seized and dissolved, and the transmission of religious programs on television and radio ended. Buildings in which religious orders resided and conducted their work were confiscated (Conde, 1999: 34; Pedraza 2007, 68–69; Guerra, 2012: 28).

From a transnational perspective, a critical issue was the presence of foreign nationals serving in clergy and religious orders on the island. In September 1961, all foreign clergy and members of religious orders were deported from Cuba by orders of the government. The deportation took place in the aftermath of the Bay of the Pigs invasion. After the attempted invasion, it became crucial for the government to underscore the national independence and sovereignty of Cuba, and to crush those groups considered threatening to the revolution's coherence and public support. As clergy, both Cuban and Spanish, fell under the group of suspect individuals and social cohorts, a total number of 131 individuals of foreign nationality, the majority of them Spanish, were forced to leave the island. For the Church, their departure marked a fatal blow for their public image and pastoral work. The loss of two thirds of the clergy resident on the island decreased the human resources and pastoral work dramatically.[5] The deportations

[4] Interview 28; Gómez Treto 1988, 60.

[5] Oral history interview no 1 by the author in Cuba, 2015.

also disconnected Cuba's Spanish Catholic legacy. As there were no longer Spaniards in the clergy present on the island, the Cuban Church was forced to enter a process of Cubanization: to reinforce the ordination of Cuban seminarians in an environment hostile to a visibly Christian lifestyle, and to obtain more autonomy in theological discourse.

In the radicalizing revolution, it was a challenge for the Church to maintain contacts and communication with the global Catholic community. Lay groups of Catholic Action maintained infrequent communication with other Hispanic groups in Europe and Latin America. In Havana, the national board of Catholic Action received ecclesial newspapers and periodicals from Madrid, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires. Among the most influential were the Spanish *Ecclesia* and the Argentinian *Criterio*.[6] Considering the challenge, the episcopate took precautions to secure the longevity of the seminary. Expecting the revolution to be a temporary matter, one that would be replaced with a solid social order sooner than later, they agreed to send numerous seminarians to Europe to continue and conclude their studies. While some studied in Rome, a notable number of them resided in Spain and finished their studies in Spanish Catholic institutes.[7]

Once the seminarians graduated, some ended up staying in their new countries of residence, while the majority opted for returning to Cuba. The returns sometimes included messy and, at times, covert diplomatic initiatives such as alternative routes and temporary visas, usually negotiated and managed through the apostolic nuncio of the Holy See to Cuba, resident in Havana.[8] With the young clerics, information and ideas from Europe arrived on the island at a time when the episcopate and the clergy were not allowed by the government to travel freely and Cuba's international relations were generally severed as well.

In the 1960s, the Cuban revolution itself entailed distinctive global and Hispanic networks. In Latin America, the revolution served as a catalyst for political movement and upheaval in the region: it inspired numerous groups in various Latin American countries to reimagine the power relations and the social order in the Americas. Cuban history was seen as a long-standing story of U.S. hegemony and dominance in military power, economy, politics and culture alike, emblematic of the region's colonial experience. At the same time, the United States attempted to prevent new revolutionary movements and uprisings from seizing power in Latin America through initiatives such as the Alliance for Progress (Tombs, 2002: 53, 67–68, 70).

Another particular type of network was the connections established between Cuba and Miami, which were reinforced by the migration of Cubans leaving the revolutionary reality from the year 1960 onward. The waves of exodus gave rise to a deeply-rooted experience of Cuban Catholicism *aquí y allá*, here and there: on the island and in the diaspora, the latter usually identified as the city of Miami in the United States. Through the experiences of exile and immigration, a subsequent community of Cubans in Miami contributed to the formation of a religious and spiritual network that both transcended and reinforced geographical, political, and ideological boundaries. *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, Cuba's patron saint, prevailed as the central figure and object of devotion on both sides of the Florida Straits.

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[6] Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Nacional, Josefina Zaragoza to Cooperadores Diocesanas 19.2.1963; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Nacional, Centro de Orientación Cinematográfica, G. P. to A. Escribane 3.4.1963; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Nacional, Josefina Zaragoza to Dr. Manuel N.J. Bello 4/1963; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Nacional, Josefina Zaragoza to Don Santiago Corral 4/1963; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Nacional, Josefina Zaragoza to Pbro. Jorge Mejía 4/1963.

[7] Oral history interview no 3 by the author in Cuba, 2015; Oral history interview no 4 by the author in Cuba, 2015; Oral history interview no 24 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

[8] Oral history interview no 11 by the author in Cuba, 2016.

As Cuba's relations with the United States deteriorated, Cuba sought support and assistance from the Soviet Union. At the same time, exporting the revolution as an internationalist enterprise became a key feature of Cuba's foreign politics. In the 1960s, the primary site of the project was in Latin America; in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of the mission shifted increasingly towards Africa (Gleijeses, 2002: 23–24, 229; Brands, 2010: 3–4; Darnton, 2014: 117, 127–128, 137). David Tombs argues that in the context of the Cold War, the Cuban revolution constituted a significant turning point for Catholic social tradition in Latin America. According to Tombs, the revolution "jolted the Church out of its complacency on social issues and more radical pastoral options started to develop" (Tombs, 2002: 49). The Cuban revolution offered a point of reference against which Catholic social teaching was mirrored and developed. The revolution, despite its evolving antireligious tone, made the Church acknowledge its own disaffiliation from the reality in which the majority of the peoples in Latin America lived, and the power of a revolutionary movement to catalyze change by mobilizing the people (Tombs, 2002: 73; Keller, 2013: 130).

However, it is crucial to note that the experience of the Church in Cuba was different in comparison to the view on the positive achievements of the revolution from outside. For the Cuban Church, processing the impact and legacy of the revolution was a more complex and multifaceted issue. Alongside of the improvement of public healthcare and education, Cuban Catholics also experienced discrimination based on religious beliefs in social and professional spheres and, more generally, marginalization from society through public opinion and ideal revolutionary behavior.

While the Cuban Church was fighting for its visibility and against the diminishing role of religion in the public sphere of the socialist society, the global Catholic Church embarked on a process of renewal. The Second Vatican Council, convening from 1962 to 1965, became a significant moment of change. Globally, it transformed Catholicism and the Catholic Church (O'Malley, 2008: 34, 94, 295–298). Locally, it underscored the revolution as an immediate context in which the Cuban Church would continue to operate. Similarly, the Cuban case would also influence the conciliar process. The opening of the Council coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, and the global atmosphere of uncertainty and fear was reflected in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John Paul XXIII, drafted during the crisis and published in April 1963 (Kuivala, 2019: 128–129). As was interpreted by the Holy See's diplomatic representative Cesare Zacchi in Cuba, the case of the revolution and the changing role of Catholicism was emblematic of a broader change that was to take place on a global level: Catholicism and the institutional church facing and coming to terms with modernity, political unrest, and revolutionary social movements.[9]

Despite the entanglement of the Council and Cuba, the Cuban Church was largely absent from the former. With the help of the Holy See's apostolic nuncio, individual bishops and clerics were able to attend some sessions of the council. On the island, information on the conciliar proceedings and theology was transmitted through printed leaflets and study sessions in communities and diocesan level meetings. In the late 1960s, clergy and laity in Cuba emphasized that the Council should be understood as a global process to which the Cuban Church could contribute with its unique experience.[10]

According to contemporaries of the period, the Cuban Church hosted few if any communications with the Conference of Latin American Bishops (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*, generally known by the acronym CELAM), the leading institution of the region for interpreting the Council. Some of Cuban's clergy considered CELAM passive and not invested in

[9] Oral history interview no 11 by the author in Cuba, 2016.

[10] Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana, sin fecha; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965.

understanding the plight of the Cuban Church. Their interpretation was that it was important for CELAM from a hemispheric perspective to not raise controversy with the Cuban government at a time when then the nexus of Catholicism and leftist politics was reassessed in Latin America. This disaffiliation from and lack of communication with the Latin American Catholic community further reinforced the orientation of the Cuban Church towards Europe. In the 1960s, the Cuban Church also received financial support for its daily activities from Catholic Churches in Europe, most importantly from Spain, Italy, and Germany.[11]

While the Cuban Church was eager to discuss and apply the ideas emerging from Vatican II, it was incapable of doing so in the socialist society. In 1968, the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Council (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*, CELAM) in Medellín, Colombia reinforced the processes of conciliar reception and interpretation in Latin America. Yet in the region's theological awakening, the Cuban episcopate and clergy considered themselves, and the local church they represented, absent from the tables of theological authority and power. Similarly, they criticized the "view from the outside" imposed on them by Latin American theologians and advocates of Liberation Theology. They argued that the experience of making sense of the revolution and what it entailed for religious Cubans in their daily lives was such an endemic process that it could not be understood from the outside.[12]

In Latin America, the general assembly of CELAM in Medellín in 1968 began the process of joint reception and interpretation of the Council. Similarly, in the late 1960s, the Cuban Church initiated the process of discussing and interpreting Vatican II and its effects on Cuba. From the central ideas of the council, Cubans assumed the "People of God" as a working concept under which it processed the role of Catholics as a social cohort in the socialist society.[13] This marked a clear transition towards Latin American theology: in the Latin American interpretative framework of Vatican II, the "People of God" was used as a framework through which the Church was envisioned as a community consisting of all ranks of ecclesial life (Dussel, 1991: 322–324; Bingemer, 2016: 25). In Cuba, the concept thus enabled the Church to also reflect upon its role in the global Catholic community and foster a sense of belonging despite the challenges in communication and collaboration due to the dire resources of pastoral work.

Belonging to a universal, global network provided the Cuban Church with a safety net against revolutionary politics. Although the government limited the public space and the role of the Church and introduced materialistic atheism as part of the official state ideology, it remained conscious of the international prestige of the Catholic Church as a global institution. Repression of the local Church and religious communities resulted in the diplomatic interventions of the Holy See and the public disapproval of the international community.[14] The Holy See was a potent diplomatic actor, which is why the government saw sustained diplomatic relations as a means to strengthen the reputation of the revolution in the international community.

The Dynamics of Power and Liberation in the 1970s

In the early 1970s, voices and ideas emphasizing lived experience in the socio-economic reality of the continent gained velocity in Latin America. Churches became immersed in the process of applying Vatican II to the local context. Gustavo Gutiérrez published his book *Teología de*

[11] Oral history interview no 2 by the author in Cuba, 2015; Oral history interview no 8 in Cuba 2015; Oral history interview no 11 by the author in Cuba, 2016; Oral history interview no 18 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

[12] Oral history interview no 3 by the author in Cuba, 2015; Oral history interview no 7 in Cuba, 2015; Oral history interview no 21 by the author in Cuba, 2017; Oral history interview no 30 by the author in Cuba, 2018.

[13] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Ayuda a Estudiantes Cubanos y Visita del Canonigo Fernando Boulard, "Visita del Canonigo Fernando Boulard."

[14] For example, Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba, Santa Sede, 4.7.1963, "Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi"; Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba, Santa Sede, "Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi."

la liberación in 1971, which came to mark the birth of a new theological orientation. The collectively emerging social consciousness of injustice and oppression brought the poor into the focus of theological reflection and pastoral action (Hebblethwaite, 1986: 81–82; Brady, 2008: 161; Dussel, 1991: 320–322; Carriquiry, 2002: 272).

In the 1970s, as the revolution began its second decade, Cuban society was faced by economic decline. The close alliance of the Cuban government with the Soviet Union became visible in the creation of a new economic model taking after the Soviet example, bureaucracy, and cultural politics. The revolutionary morale and *conciencia*, commitment to constructing the socialist society through active participation and work, were challenged by the low wages and insufficient material incentives. The scarcity of material resources and standing in long lines to purchase food products and daily goods became shared social experiences for Cubans. The first half of the 1970s also saw the *quinquenio gris*, the five gray years of internal repression and restricted public expression. At the same time, the state reinforced its focus on education and introduced material atheism as the founding principle of human development (Quiroga, 2005: 31, 185; Padura Fuentes, 2008: 348–349; Pérez-Stable, 2012: 104, 118).

In Latin America, liberation theology created a mass movement that brought new ecclesial agency to previously underrepresented social groups (Tombs, 2002: 228–230). In Cuba, the movement became a discourse through which the Church defined both its position in Cuban society and its role as part of the global Catholic community. As a contested form of theological thought, liberation theology became emblematic of the dynamics and tensions between the local, hemispheric, and global Catholicism in Cuba.

In normative discourse, the institutional Church in Cuba recognized the potential and influence of liberation theology in Latin America yet did not engage with it officially. While the Church attempted to reorient itself towards Latin American theology and the employment of Vatican II's interpretative framework from a Latin American perspective, it avoided endorsing liberation theology as a solution to the Cuban case. The episcopal appointments followed the general Latin American policy of the 1980s, emphasizing the rejection of liberation theology and obedience to Rome. Similarly, Cuba's engagement with CELAM was reinforced during the period in which the conference turned away from liberation theology as a comprehensive framework for the Latin American Church (Kuivala 2019, 269–271).

Liberation theology was nonetheless analyzed by the young generation of theologians, the Cuban national Catholic seminary under the supervision of the seminary's most progressive teachers.[15] As the offspring of the revolutionary period, they consciously attempted to understand the Cuban reality and lived experience and move from confrontation to coexistence.[16] Theology was a means to bridge the gap between the Church and Cuban society. Despite the suspicion and rejection of liberation theology by the Catholic hierarchy on the island, which built on a reading of liberation theology through a political lens, some of its ideas found resonance among the more progressive clergy and laity in various areas in Cuba.

On the grassroots level, the ideas derived from the central role of base ecclesial communities and pastoral work stemming from their reality echoed in the daily attitudes and work of some of the clerics. Particularly in Cuba's new suburban neighborhoods that were the results of socialist urban planning and construction, the recently ordained clerics were open to conceptualizing their work through liberation theology. While the government did not allow the construction of new church buildings in the new residential areas, the clerics carried out work in the neighborhoods by visits or personal residence. In one such community in eastern Cuba, for instance, a cleric proudly considered himself a brother of his Latin American fellow theologians

[15] Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio, Teología de la Liberación, "Teología de la Liberación."
[16] Oral history interview no 23 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

who were motivated by a search of liberation from poverty and oppression, and praised the positive achievements of the Cuban revolution in the same fight.[17]

"The Latin American man wants to carve out his own destiny."[18] In the national Catholic seminary, these words introduced the popularity of liberation theology to the seminarians. As the first generation of Cubans reaching adulthood in the revolutionary period, the gaze of the seminarians towards global perspectives, also theologically, represented a new opening. It is notable that their increasing interest in Latin American theologies occurred simultaneously with the revolution's focus on internationalism and global solidarity, which was visible in, first, Cuba's engagement with leftist movements in various Latin American countries and, later, its direct involvement with Africa (Pedraza, 2007: 118–120; Kuivala, 2019: 100).

At the same time, the institutional Church attempted to balance its gaze towards Latin America with sustained support from the European center of the Catholic world. In its attempt to maintain a close relationship to the Holy See and gain from the international prestige of the Holy See's diplomatic efforts in Cuba, the Cuban Church rejected liberation theology as an institutionally sanctioned model of theological thought and action on the island. At the same time, ideas cultivated from liberation theology gained support from the grassroots, which further contributed to both diversity and tension within the Church.

In the spring of 1974, the Holy See's Secretary of State, Agostino Casaroli, visited Cuba.[19] Casaroli was the central character of *Ostpolitik*, the Holy See's framework for engagement with and resistance to socialism. The central message of the visit was clear: the Holy See was invested in maintaining a status quo in Cuban Church–State relations and a diplomatic presence on the island.[20] The visit also signaled the compliance of the Cuban Church to the Holy See and *Ostpolitik* as its method for navigating the challenged posed on the Church by socialism globally (Kuivala 2019, 216–217).

At the same time, the Cuban Church continued to receive funding from European sources such as Adveniat. Founded in 1961, the German Catholic organization provided numerous Latin American churches with financial assistance. The Cuban episcopal conference engaged with Adveniat adjacent to the second general conference of CELAM in Medellín in 1968. After the representatives of the Cuban Church established relations with the organization at the meeting, Adveniat approached the Cuban episcopal conference and proposed collaboration in the form of financial support. Through the intermediation of the Holy See, Adveniat's support for the Cuban Church was directed particularly to retired clergy in several dioceses.[21]

It is noteworthy that while the Cuban Church relied on the economic relief of the organization, Adveniat was challenged by a large number of prominent theologians in Europe for using financial stimuli to sanction local churches against adopting liberation theology as their preferred framework in Latin America (Dussel, 1991: 323; Krier Mich, 2004: 246). The engagement of Adveniat in the region shows how the transnational networks of European and Latin American Catholicism spanned beyond the shared Hispanic and colonial roots. While

[17] Oral history interview no 24 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

[18] El hombre latinoamericano quiere labrar su propio destino. SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

[19] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Casaroli, "Visita a Cuba de Monseñor Agostino Casaroli."

[20] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Casaroli, "Noticias publicadas con ocasión de la visita a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli"; "Exhortación del Episcopado Cubano a los Sacerdotes, Religiosas y Fieles 1974."

[21] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Adveniat, 11.7.1968, "Evelio Díaz Cía to Paul Hoffacker"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Adveniat, 23.10.1968, "Pedro Meurice Estiú to Paul Hoffacker"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Adveniat, 7.12.1967 "Paul Hoffacker to Evelio Díaz Cía"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Adveniat, 7.3.1968, "Evelio Díaz Cía to Paul Hoffacker."

they were not solely limited to the Hispanic context, the financial Europe-Latin America exchange also reflected historical power relations and the dynamics of a long-standing tutelage relationship that concerned not only the economy and society but also theological normativity.

Throughout the 1970s, the Cuban Church sought simultaneously to accommodate to the local circumstances and revolutionary politics and to integrate in the global Catholic community with new vigor. The discourse on liberation theology brought forward the complexity of balancing between the European and Latin American methodology of theology (Kuivala 2019, 268–269). With the competing visions on whether liberation theology was an option for reconciling religion and the revolution, the Cuban Church found itself involved in the power struggle of theological authority between Europe and Latin America. At the same time, the Cuban Church also experienced alienation from the Latin American context from which the new theological emphasis on the lived experience emerged. The Catholic experience in Cuba was not similar to either European or Latin American Hispanic Catholicism; it reflected both of the orientations yet resulted in an endemic experience that escaped and eluded them.

The emerging generation of Cuban theologians balanced between the Church and society in Cuba as well as between Europe and Latin America in global Catholicism. Socially progressive seminarians, laypeople, and members of religious orders, who were inspired by Vatican II, attempted to balance their Cubanness with the Catholic social doctrine and the everyday life in the revolutionary reality.[22] As they were not directly affiliated with Spain, like their predecessors had been prior to the deportations of 1961, their responses to both the local context and the emerging Latin American theologies stemmed from an endemic Cuban experience. As they were the first generation to reach adulthood in the revolutionary period, socialist Cuba was the immediate context of their quotidian life and one they had grown to consider not a temporary but a permanent social reality. Because of this shift, a lived experience different from the one of their Spanish predecessors was the primary catalyst for new theological and pastoral thought.

A New Cuban Theology in the 1980s

Compared to the rest of Latin America, Cuba arrived at interpreting and implementing the Council rather late. A crucial push to engage in local, national interpretation was the third general conference of CELAM in Puebla in 1979. As the immediate Church–State confrontation of the earlier phases of the revolution had reached a delicate yet sustained *status quo*, the Cuban episcopate was able to move more freely, with the permission of the Cuban government, and sustain international relations and activities with more frequency.

On the island, the experience of Puebla resulted in a reawakening urge to analyze and develop Cuban theological thought that would respond to the local circumstances. In the first half of the 1980s, the Cuban Church undertook a process of reflection and reorientation. The twofold process started with *Reflexion Eclesial Cubana* (REC): a diocesan-level reflection of the prevailing ecclesial and socio-economic realities and the drafting of a working document. In February 1986, the findings of the REC process were then discussed at *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano* (ENEC), the two-day national congress that represented both the culmination of a lengthy process of internal reflection and, finally, a public act of outreach towards Cuban society (Kuivala 2019, 235–237).

The aim of the REC process was twofold. First, the reflection aimed at a realistic analysis of the social, political, and economic realities of Cuba, and a theological discernment of the role of the Church and Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary society. Second, with the chosen approach of experience-based reflection, the process represented the realignment of Cuban Catholicism in the global Catholic community.

[22] Oral history interview no 22 by the author in Cuba, 2017; Oral history interview no 23 by the author in Cuba, 2017; Oral history interview no 24 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

As part of the process, the Cuban Church discussed and defined its position in the Catholic cultures between Europe and Latin America. When characterizing the effort to the Secretary of the Spanish Bishops Conference, Carlos Amigo Vallejo, who was a primary representative of the Spanish Church in the process, the Cuban bishop Adolfo Rodríguez called it "a Puebla for Cuba", Cuba's own *Pueblita*. Through the reflection process, the Church formulated a distilled interpretation of Vatican II through Medellín and Puebla. It attempted to absorb and process not only Vatican II as a global process but also the reception of the council in Medellín and Puebla as Latin American expressions of the Council at the same time. This was criticized by the Spanish Church as resulting in a partial inclusion of the elements suitable for Cuba from the cumulative ideas expressed at different moments and the profound adoption of none.[23] Inscribed in the commentary was also a criticism of the way the Cuban Church attempted to avoid theological ideas that could lead to political connotations.

Central to developing a new orientation was the reconsideration of theological methodology. A change in the way the Cuban Church discussed its own role in both the socialist society and global Catholicism reflected well the integration in Latin American modern theology. From CELAM and Medellín, the Cuban Church assumed the *ver–juzgar–actuar* (see-judge-act) method: ten years after the methodology building on the analysis of the lived experience was introduced in Latin America, the Cuban Church attempted to process its own pastoral and social realities by assuming the framework, too.

It is notable that the method was not a novelty in Cuba. In the 1960s, when Catholic associations for the laity had constituted a vital channel for discourse and agency within the revolutionary society, it had constituted a staple in biblical reflection and socio-ethical discussion.[24] The method originated from Europe: it was developed in the 1930s by the Belgian Catholic Father Joseph Cardijn for lay groups to use in the reflection and analysis of their daily environment in the light of the gospel (Krier Mich 2004, 74). Yet the see-judge-act method was reclaimed by the Latin American churches in the late 1960s, and was utilized for interpreting the Council and developed into a tool of theological and social analysis building on lived experience on the continent. In such ways, a transatlantic exchange spanning beyond the Hispanic context was also present in Latin American churches in ways that signaled not only change but also continuity.

Following the example set by CELAM on the use of the see-judge-act method, the Cuban Church committed to assessing its work, both past and future, within the method's analytical framework. The shift marked a deeper process of reorientation: moving away from a Eurocentric focus on doctrine, the Cuban Church began to seek ways to incorporate into the Latin American framework that emphasized lived reality and its analysis in the light of theology.[25] The method, as it was interpreted and applied in Latin America, bode well for the increasing agency of the laity and their role as conscious citizens in society. In Cuba, the emerging generation of theologians was critical about the implementation of the experience-based methodology.

On the island, the process of theological reflection was organized as a series of diocesan-level meetings that focused on the sharing of experiences on living in socialist Cuba as Catholics in the early 1980s. The participants, comprising clergy, members of religious orders and the laity alike, discussed both intra-ecclesial matters and the social, economic, and political conditions of Cuba. This was central to the process of searching for shared spaces and common ground for all Cubans in the lived experience of the revolutionary reality. The working paper drafted as a synthesis of the discussions reflected the lived experience and paved the way for

[23] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 10.12.1985, "Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano."

[24] For example, Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, Acción Católica, Junta Femenina, J.F.F.A.C.C. Juventud Universitaria Católica: Jornada de Estudios 1959.

[25] Kuivala 2019, 249.

developing both new theological ideas and approaches as well as concrete suggestions for pastoral work and the public presence of religious communities in society. In the process of formulating this new orientation, the Cuban Church relied on feedback from European churches.

When drafting new theological thought and expression, the Cuban working group presented the documents to the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church in Spain. This signaled a trajectory of continuity in Hispanic Catholic exchange. Although the Spanish clergy was no longer permitted to reside in Cuba, they continued to influence the thought of the Cuban Church. The exchange itself formed a paradox: while attempting to orientate toward Latin American Catholic thought, the Cuban Church sought the support of European Catholicism, embodied by the long and complex historical relationship between Cuba and Spain. As such, the dynamics were emblematic of long-standing and deeper power relations of tutelage in theology and ecclesial life from Hispanic Europe to Latin America and the Caribbean. As the case of REC commentary shows, the relationship entailed a tendency to control and orientate normative theological thought as well.

The Spanish conference provided the Cuban Church with a written commentary and a set of suggestions. Part of the criticism was directed at the apolitical agenda of the Cuban Church. According to commentators, the Cuban episcopate enforced a poignantly non-political voice for the Church in Cuban society.[26] By carefully avoiding open criticism of and consequent conflict with the government, it disaffiliated itself from the constructive discourse of Latin American Catholicism and, paradoxically, presented the socially conscious Latin American theology as more descriptive of than normative to social change.

The Catholic Church in Spain challenged the new Cuban theology for lacking the courage to reject the socialist order and appear a clear voice of resistance or to embrace liberation theology as a viable means to integrate with the revolution. According to the most poignant criticism, the Cuban Church seemed to develop its post-conciliar theology and social thought in complete isolation from the rest of Hispanic Catholicism.[27] From this perspective, the Cuban development also posed a risk to progressive Latin American Catholic thought: in its conformity, the disaffiliation constructed by the Cuban Church could be harnessed to serve as a counterforce to liberation theology and an ideological weapon against social progression in Latin America.

In the Latin American context, the Cuban Church was criticized for "polishing off the edges" of Puebla as a socio-ethical commentary.[28] By leaving Cuba's most critical social and political issues unaddressed, the local Church fell out of synch with other voices and currents of Latin American theological thought emerging as a response to Vatican II and the analysis of the lived social, economic, and political realities in Latin America. Because of this, the Cuban Catholicism fell behind in the global development. Paying attention to this, the Spanish commentators criticized the Cuban Church for not paying sufficient attention and analyzing in depth the central concepts through which the role of the Church was discussed in Latin America in the reception and interpretation of Vatican II. The Kingdom of God as a temporal reality, the history of salvation and its nexus to the struggle for liberation, and the role of the People of God as a socially active group in society were absent from the Cuban interpretation of a Latin American theology.

[26] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 10.12.1985, "Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano."
[27] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 10.12.1985, "Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano."
[28] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 10.12.1985, "Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano."

According to the Spanish commentators, the Cuban Church lacked "courage, bravery, [and] risk." The missionary spirit that Catholic communities attempted to cultivate was considered too focused on evangelization, ignoring and resisting the prophetic voices that emerged in Latin America and could have – should have – gained a more audible role in Cuba too. Central to the Spanish critique was an emphasis on encouraging the Cuban Church to seek common ground with the government. According to the Spanish Episcopal Conference, the Cuban Church had not engaged sufficiently with the State and the revolutionary leadership, who had expressed their tentative interest in searching channels for rapprochement and realignment of religion and politics,[29] most likely influenced by the experiences of the junctions of Christian and political thought in other Latin American countries.

While the Cuban Church rejected liberation theology, it employed many of the central ideas of it and Latin American theology more generally, into the approach by which it was possible to bridge the religious and revolutionary realities on the island. Poverty was one such concept on which the Cuban Church developed a local reading in the 1980s. Employing the Latin American discursive framework of the late 1960s, the Cuban Church reinforced its commitment to the Preferential Option for the Poor: solidarity with the oppressed, marginalized and impoverished. In socialist Cuba, the Church defined poverty as a lack of sufficient income and as an inability to secure work. Additionally, poverty was also present in numerous disadvantaged groups in society:

> …Alcoholics, the disorientated, those tired of life, those who'd experienced failures in life, non-conformists to the revolution, those who did not know Christ, prisoners and their families, those marginalized from society, those practicing popular religions, those who had lost their homes.[30]

At the same time, the Cuban Church defined poverty as a spiritual orientation that entailed the rejection of hegemony and privilege.[31] In this sense, the ideas reflected both the new Latin American Catholic social teaching and the ethos of the Cuban revolution. As such, the discourse of the Cuban Church in the early 1980s not only reoriented the local church towards the Latin American Catholic community; it also enabled the search for common ground with the Cuban state.

The Cuban government noticed the development, too. For Cuban Church–State relations, liberation theology and the role of religion in socialist society were subjects of political and politicized discourse upheld by the government. The Cuban government attempted to harness liberation theology into a method that would enable and enhance a political reading of the role of religion on the island.[32] In the Cuban context, liberation was reframed by the government as a feature of the revolution's ethos to which Latin American theology corresponded with an emphasis on the preferential option for the poor.

To reinforce this reading, State officials invited liberation theologians to visit Cuba and host conferences on the potential of liberation theology for aligning religion to the revolution. Among the visitors was Frei Betto, the Brazilian theologian of liberation and a Dominican

[29] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 10.12.1985, "Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano."

[30] Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, REC, Opiniones, "Camaguey Acción Profética Obispos... 292. Pág. 5."

[31] Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, REC, Asamblea diocesana, Pinar del Rio, "Mensaje de la asamblea diocesana de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana de Pinar del Río a las diócesis y al ENEC."

[32] Oral history interview no 31 by the author in Cuba, 2017.

priest, who was invested in international efforts to bring Christianity into dialogue with Marxism and facilitate mutual understanding through dialogue.[33] According to contemporaries, the Catholic hierarchy advised the clergy, religious orders, and the laity against attending the events organized by the government. Some did so nevertheless: particularly young clerics and sociopolitically orientated laypeople were eager to learn from the visitors and to see the reactions of those Cubans who attended the meetings as representatives of the State.[34]

As the visits suggested, the Cuban government was interested in exploring the intersections of liberation theology and leftist political thought. A significant, publicly visible nod towards liberation theology occurred in 1985, when the lengthy discussions of Fidel Castro and Frei Betto were published as a book under the title *Fidel y la Religión*. The book marked a turning point in socialist Cuba: for the first time since the early 1960s, religion was discussed in the public sphere in a positively acknowledging manner by the leadership of the revolution. As such, the book also occupied a role in the construction of revolutionary historiography: it provided the frameworks within which religion could be discussed and approached in Cuban society (Kuivala 2019, 279–281).

In this narrative, Fidel Castro addressed liberation theology as a way, on one hand, to bridge Christianity and the revolution and, on the other, to juxtapose Europe and Latin America in the context of social progress. He presented Europe and Latin America as opposing tendencies in the discourse on colonialism, imperialism, the liberation of Third World countries, and Cuba's solidarity for the cause.[35] Both Europe and North America appeared as the opponents of liberation theology and, as such, liberation in Latin America. The discussions alluded to an alliance of Christianity and socialism, in which the Third World constituted a shared cause that aligned Cuba's revolutionary internationalism with liberation theology as a new theological discourse responding to global injustice.

Simultaneously with Castro's interest in seeking common ground with progressive Latin American theologians, the Holy See was engaged in a campaign against liberation theology. In 1984, it pushed back against Latin American theologians with the publication by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, titled *Instruction on Certain Aspects of "Theology of Liberation."* Two years later, the second instruction toned down the stark rejection yet remained critical of liberation theology (Tombs 2002, 241–244; Hebblethwaite 2007, 216–220; Turner 2007, 229–230).

As the discourses presented above demonstrate, several factors informed the institutional Church in Cuba in their rejection of liberation theology as a viable theological framework for the local church. Following the Holy See's stance on liberation theology, the Cuban Catholic hierarchy assumed a political interpretation of theology and a stark rejection of its nexus to Marxist thought in Latin America. For the Cuban Church, the interest of the Cuban government in employing liberation theology as a bridge from the revolution to religion was a source of further suspicion. At the same time, the suspicion was reinforced by the continuing support the Cuban Church received from European Catholic institutions critical of liberation theology.

Yet the rejection of liberation theology could not be equated with the rejection of Latin American Catholic social thought. Although the Cuban bishops considered liberation theology an unsuitable option, the Cuban Church was invested in implementing the ideas of Vatican II and its Latin American interpretations on the island, too. As the REC and ENEC processed showed, experience-based reflection made it possible for the Church to develop new ways to subsist and exercise agency in the Cuban socialist society. The turn towards lived experience

[33] Oral history interview no 10 by the author in Cuba, 2016; Oral history interview no 27 by the author in Cuba, 2017.
[34] Oral history interview no 23 by the author in Cuba, 2017; Oral history interview no 24 by the author in Cuba, 2017.
[35] Fidel y la religión 1987, 246–260.

connected the Cuban Church to the new Latin American theological thought and pastoral action.

At ENEC, the composition of foreign participants revealed both the reorientation and the continuity in transnational power relations. The majority of the foreign invitees arrived from Latin America. From CELAM, the general secretary, Darío Castrillón, was invited to both direct the discussion and learn about the Cuban context. Cubans also requested that CELAM appointed two lay participants to attend the meeting and engage with the Cuban laity. In their conversations, particular topics, such as the role of base ecclesial communities and liberation theology in grassroots ecclesial agency, were brought up with interest by Cubans in both formal and informal settings.[36]

Aside from CELAM, several Latin American churches sent their representatives to Cuba. Bishops from Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republican were invited to include the Caribbean churches in the process.[37] Arturo Rivera Damas, a Bishop from El Salvador was invited in order to bring the Cuban Church "even closer to the Church in Central America."[38] The Hispanic connection from Cuba to the United States was recognized through the invitation of the rector of Miami's Catholic seminary.[39] His presence made visible the continuing transnational exchange of Cuban religiosity on the island and in diaspora.

From Europe, the Archbishop of Seville was invited as the only representative of Spanish Catholicism.[40] However, also Adveniat's director, the German Bishop Emil L. Stehle attended the meeting and stayed on the island after it, too, to discuss the continuing financial aid of Adveniat to the Cuban Church. Stehle, who was also the titular Bishop of Quito, was active in exchange with Latin American churches. Since the early 1980s, he also collaborated with Rivera Damas in an effort to promote peace in Latin America.[41] Stehle's presence at ENEC made visible the continuing exchange between Europe and Cuba, marked also by financial dependence and the consequent power relations relating to theological normativity. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that the Cuban Church emphasized Stehle's role as an observing attendee and not as a participant who would facilitate the sessions or provide official commentaries on them.

ENEC was an event used to communicate the new theological and pastoral orientation of the Church to society: it signaled a policy of openness, dialogue, and reconciliation and at-

[36] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, "Invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 6.11.1985, "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez to Excmo. Mons. Darío Castrillón"; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana, ENEC, Intercambio de los delegados con los invitados, "Palabras del Padre Joao Edenio Rey Valle / La noche del 18 de febrero de 1986 en el ENEC, durante la sesión efectuada entre los invitados y los delegados. Tema: comunidades eclesiales del base"; Archivo Histórico de la Arquídiocesis de La Habana ENEC, Intercambio de los delegados con los invitados, Palabras del Monseñor McGrath, Obispo de Panama, sobre el tema "Comunidades del base" en el ENEC.

[37] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 24.12.1985, "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Mons. Samuel Emmanuel Carter"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 7.11.1985 "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Mons. Juan Fremiot Torres Oliver"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Nicolás de Jesús López Rodríguez."

[38] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 7.11.1985, "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas."

[39] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 7.11.1985 "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Sr. Pbro. Felipe Estévez."

[40] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 2.1.1986, "Carlos Amigo Vallejo to Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera."

[41] Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, 7.11.1985, "Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Ecmo. Mons. Emil L. Stehle"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, "Invitados extranjeros que han confirmado su asistencia al ENEC"; Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, ENEC, "Relación de invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano (ENEC)."

tempted to move away from polarization and confrontation. The Church extended rapprochement to the Cuban government and people, including non-believers and ardent supporters of the revolution or socialism. For this rapprochement, it was critical to both recontextualize the Cuban experience and to situate it in a broader, global framework of both religious and revolutionary contexts.

Conclusions

The chapter argues for and focuses on two parallel developments in the transnational Hispanic networks of Catholicism in Cuba during the revolutionary period. First, by the use of new Cuban primary sources, the chapter discusses and analyzes the complexity of the Cuban Church's attempt at reorientation from a Eurocentric historical orientation towards the new Latin American theological thought. Second, the article shows that as a simultaneous process, the Cuban revolution and its stance on religion evolved in tandem with the rise of Latin American Catholic social consciousness, although this did always garner the approval and support of the institutional Church on the island.

The chapter draws on the argument that the development was a result of two simultaneously occurring processes: the reorientation of the Cuban Church towards Latin American Catholicism and the Cubanization of the local church resulting from the revolution. The development was not linear nor all-encompassing. While the turn towards Latin America highlighted the need to decolonize theology and transnational ecclesial relations, the continuing financial dependence and patronage from European churches left the process unfinished. At this intersection, the complexity of the negotiating process was revealed through the dynamics and power relations between Cuba, other Latin American churches, and Europe.

At the center of the chapter is an analysis of the theological and pastoral reorientation of the Cuban Church. Using the revolution of Fidel Castro as a starting point, the chapter traces the internal discussion and external relations of the church as it struggled to establish a role and agency in socialist Cuba. In the 1960s, the primary focus of the local Church was in adjusting to the radically changing and highly polarized political, economic, and social realities on the island. In this environment, the Hispanic networks of the Church, namely the Spanish cultural influence and the number of Spaniards in the Cuban clergy, appeared a threat to national coherence and the legitimacy of the revolution. This was most apparent when the Cuban government deported all foreign clergy and members of religious orders residing on the island in 1961.

In these circumstances, the Church both held its international relations in high esteem and experienced alienation from the global Catholic community. Particularly the diplomatic effort of the Holy See was crucial for sustaining the Church in Cuba. At the same time, the Cuban Catholic community experienced severe isolation from the Second Vatican Council as a global process and its interpretation in Latin America as a regional response. It was not until the 1970s that the Cuban Church began to process the legacies of both the revolution and Vatican II. For navigating the challenging context in which the Church and religious communities operated, a new interest in Latin American theological thought and social consciousness provided a direction and a methodology suitable for the Cuban situation. Inspired by the fourth general conference of CELAM in Puebla in 1979, the Cuban Church began to envision a process of reflection and reorientation that would bring the local church up to date with both global and Latin American Catholicism.

The Latin American influence and, consequently, the attempt to turn away from a heavily European orientation was best expressed in the employment of experience-based theological methodology to analyze the Cuban situation in the light of Catholic social doctrine. In the 1980s, the Cuban Church took visible steps towards constructing theology and pastoral work that would correspond to the lived experience of Cubans in the socialist society. *Reflexión*

Eclesial Cubana (REC) and *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano* (ENEC) signaled the commitment of the Church to both the Cuban and the Latin American context. Through these processes, the institutional church appraised the Latin American theology that built on lived experience and social consciousness, on one hand, and rejected liberation theology, on the other. Behind the stance was the analysis on the junctions of liberation theology and Marxism as well as adherence to the Holy See in its criticism on liberation theology.

As such, the Cuban debate on the legitimacy and role of liberation theology reflected the changes taking place in global Catholicism: the shifting dynamics of authority and power between Rome – and, more broadly, Europe – as the center of the Catholic world and Latin America as a periphery attempting to obtain more agency and autonomy. After three decades of theological processing, the Cuban Church of the mid-1980s appeared a church balancing between the continents. At this intersection, the response of the Cuban Church was to become rooted in the local context, drawing on and discussing the lived experience while conscious of the global development. As such, Cuban Catholicism was marked by both the Latin American influence and the continuity of a European legacy.

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